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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: PUBLIC ISRAELI RESPONSE TO ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT (U)

REF: RIYADH 0636

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (B and D).

11. (U) Summary: Initial GOI reaction to the Arab League Summit has been cautiously positive. PM Ehud Olmert's office announced that they would "study in detail the initiative and see if there is anything new ... and then respond." In the official response, the MFA released a statement that skirts divisive substantive issues and concludes that a dialogue with moderate Arab states can have a "positive role." In press interviews, PM Olmert has noted a "revolutionary change in outlook" among certain Arab states, praised "interesting ideas" in the Saudi initiative, and stated that "we are ready to hold discussions and hear from the Saudis about their approach and to tell them about ours." Vice PM Shimon Peres and DefMin Amir Peretz have been even more forward leaning. At the same time, the GOI has retained its hard line on the "right of return." An upcoming GOI cabinet session and CoDel meetings with Olmert and Livni on April 1 should provide an opportunity for a more nuanced readout of the GOI's views and intentions. End summary.

12. (U) The Prime Minister's Office announced that the GOI would "study in detail the initiative and see if there is anything new, and changes, and then respond." The most likely time for such a response would be following the weekly cabinet meeting on April 1, when the PMO issues a communique summarizing decisions and Olmert's comments on each major issue.

13. (U) The Foreign Ministry's spokesperson released the preliminary GOI response late on March 29. That statement (full text in paragraph six) said, "Israel is sincerely interested in pursuing a dialogue with those Arab states that desire peace with Israel, this in order to promote a process of normalization and cooperation. Israel hopes that the Riyadh Summit will contribute to this effort." The statement discusses the GOI's commitment to "fundamental principles" regarding peace with the Palestinians (a veiled reference to the refugee issue) and concludes that a dialogue with moderate Arab states can have a "positive role" in supporting the Israeli-Palestinian track.

14. (U) In the traditional round of pre-Passover interviews, PM Olmert has tried to accentuate the possibilities of the "Saudi initiative," which he and the rest of the GOI continue to differentiate from the Arab League initiative. In one interview recorded before the Riyadh Summit concluded, Olmert said that the some regional states have experienced a "revolutionary change in outlook," and no longer see Israel as the biggest threat to their security. After praising King Abdullah, he said there are "interesting ideas" in the Saudi initiative, adding "we are ready to hold discussions and hear from the Saudis about their approach and to tell them about ours." While not directly addressing the substance of such talks, Olmert reiterated elsewhere in the interview that the GOI "will not accept any kind of Israeli responsibility for

the refugees -- period." Vice PM Peres also responded positively, urging direct Israeli negotiations with Arab states. DefMin Peretz went even further, calling on Israel to accept the Saudi initiative "as a basis for negotiations."

15. (S/NF) Prior to the Riyadh Summit, senior MFA officials told visiting USG officials that FM Livni planned to contact her colleagues from Egypt, Jordan, Oman, UAE, Tunisia, Qatar, and Morocco by phone to discuss the outcome of the summit. Post should have more information on these calls and on PMO contacts with the Arabs following appointments with Olmert and Livni on April 1.

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Text of Official GOI Statement  
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16. (U) "Israeli Statement on Arab Summit in Riyadh 29-Mar-2007

Israel believes in peace, and seeks to establish peaceful and neighborly relations both with the Palestinian people and with all the states of the region.

Israel is sincerely interested in pursuing a dialogue with those Arab states that desire peace with Israel, this in order to promote a process of normalization and cooperation. Israel hopes that the Riyadh Summit will contribute to this effort.

Israel's position with regard to the peace process with the Palestinians is founded upon fundamental principles, the most central of which is the existence of two nation-states, with each state addressing the national aspirations of its own people - Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the

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Palestinian people - and with both states coexisting in peace, free of the threat of terror and violence.

For this purpose, a direct dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians is necessary.

Israel also believes that moderate Arab states can fill a positive role by encouraging regional cooperation, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian track. A dialogue between these states and Israel can contribute to this end."

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